Rental Assistance Webinar 11.12.09
Questions and Answers

Q When making damage claims, should we submit them to Elaine? How do you want special claims handled?

A Damage claims are a Housing Related Expense, which requires Minnesota Housing approval on a case by case basis. These should be submitted to Elaine Vollbrecht for approval before you submit them on a monthly payment request. In your submission, include a detailed description of the situation. You may be asked to submit additional supporting documentation, such as evidence of repairs completed, work orders, invoices, etc. Since payment of damage claims decreases the funds available for rental subsidy, it is important to have a consistent written policy for handling these.

Q With programming, Elaine discussed items that were required... I just wanted to confirm these items and they include: Tenant Letter of Understanding, Payment standard and Utility Chart, Evidence of Transition Plan and Progress. Evidence of Progress could include a communication log of dates the participant and advocate spoke as well as progress notes. Am I missing anything?

A The Housing Trust Fund Program and Ending Long-Term Homelessness Initiative Fund Rental Assistance Program Guide, pages 29 – 30, states the following regarding the tenant file.

"At a minimum, the administrator should maintain tenant files with the following data:
- Appropriate referral to program
- Program Application
- Acceptance and/or denial letter
- Long-Term Homelessness Verification form, if applicable
- Minnesota Housing Government Data Practices Act Disclosure Statement, form
- Income and Asset Documentation
- Calculation of tenant payment and Rental Subsidy
- Annual Eligibility and Recertification Form
- Payment Standard Waiver, if applicable
- File documentation when program exceptions and/or waivers have been made
- Annual recertification documentation
- Signed and dated Lease, Lease Addendum, and rental subsidy contract
- Signed and dated passing HQS or local housing maintenance code inspection
- Evidence of transition plan and goal obtainment."

For evidence of communication regarding the transition plan, a log showing dates of contact with the participant may be created by the Administrator.

Q Is EFT the same as wired?

A EFT payments come from our agency and are transferred to your agency's bank account. Wires are paid by another entity (Wells Fargo) for ELHIF grants only.

Q It would be helpful to have a session regarding families coming to the end of their five year term limit. I am specifically curious about extensions - who and when we can do them and for how long?

A Here's what the Program Guide says about the time limit: "Length of Time"

"The HTF/ELHIF program rental assistance program is designed to be temporary in nature. An eligible tenant shall not receive rental assistance for longer than five consecutive years. This time limit does not apply to eligible tenants who have applied for federal rental assistance, but have not been accepted in such programs due to funding limitations or who are ineligible for federal rental assistance."

If the participant has applied for federal rental assistance and is on a waiting list (or more than one), or has agreed to apply when the waiting list opens, or is ineligible for federal rental assistance, they are still eligible for the Housing Trust Fund – Long Term Homeless rental assistance. If these circumstances do not apply, rental assistance may terminate. Proper notice should be given.

Please document the tenant file in these situations. You do not need to formally seek additional time if the circumstances apply, but it would be helpful to us if you note in the monthly log in the “Comments” field the reason why the participant is over 60 months.

Q Can you explain in more detail the "organizational audit"

A We will be requesting a copy of the most recent organizational financial audit or report, based on the type of organization.

Q If there is no updated certification do you still want a "no' in the field or can it be left blank?

A It would be more consistent if you would enter the “No”, so there is no doubt what the status of the participant is.

Q Will your presentation be available via e-mail?

A It will not be available by e-mail, but check our web site for a recorded version of today's webinar.

Q Will the list of items needed in each tenant file be listed again? I was unable to copy down the slide on time.

A If you were not able to get all the information, you can go on the website and review this webinar again. *(Please see copy of that slide at the end of this document.)*

Q Why put the utility standards and payment standards for each tenant? It is the same for all like sized units. I'm referring to the tenant file, as just stated, not the electronic form

A We need this information for auditing purposes. When we do desk audits, we only look at a select percentage of your portfolio and it is important to include all information so that the auditor won't have any questions.

An easy way to enter the payment standard if it is the same is to enter it in one cell and then click on that column and do a shift D on your keypad and it should copy them down that specific column.

Q Do we have to use your intake form or do we still have the option to use ours if it contains all necessary information?

A The intake form (also may be called application or questionnaire) is a required form, but the format is optional. You can use your own form as long as it contains all of the data needed to determine a participant’s eligibility for your program.

Q With the new income verification forms coming up, are we required to use them or can we continue using current forms?

A You can use your forms as long as they contain all of the required fields to obtain your tenant data. Our forms are used by other programs, so some of our administrators might already be using them.

Q Who would we contact if we have suggestions?

A You can either contact your technician or Elaine Vollbrecht either by email or by phone.

Q How do we participate in providing feedback?

A We will be randomly contacting some of our administrators and asking specific questions to gather data. Any suggestions are welcome. We want to know how our programs and procedures are working.